

# **Vocabulary - Elections**

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A series of exercises for non-native speakers of English to practise vocabulary associated with elections.

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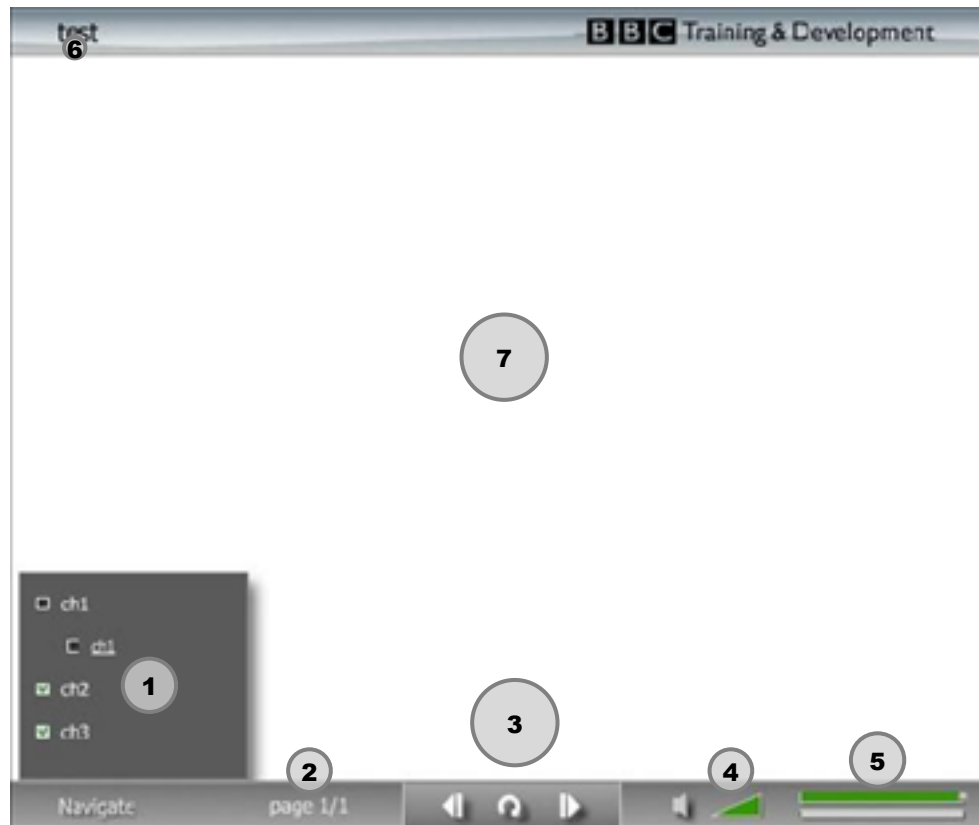
# 1

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## How to use this course

# How to use this course

Before you start, click on the circles in the sample screen below to find out how to use the course.



1



Click on the word 'Navigate' to make the course menu appear and again to make it disappear. It displays the course structure and your progress. You can use this menu to move to different parts of the course quickly.

You can jump directly to a page by clicking on it.

Now close this box and click on another circle, or click on next page if this is the last circle.

---

2



*The page indicator shows you how far through the course you are.*

*Now close this box and click on another circle, or click on next page if this is the last circle.*

---

3



*These are the control buttons. The arrow on the left takes you to the previous page, the circular arrow in the middle reloads the current page if you need to read or listen again and the arrow on the right moves to the next page.*

*Now close this box and click on another circle, or click on next page if this is the last circle.*

---

4



*These are the volume controls. Click on the speaker icon to turn sound on and off, or drag the green slider to control sound levels.*

*Now close this box and click on another circle, or click on next page if this is the last circle.*

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5



*The progress bars show you how far you are through the course and through the current section.*

*Now close this box and click on another circle, or click on next page if this is the last circle.*

---

6



*The title of the course is displayed here.*

*Now close this box and click on another circle, or click on next page if this is the last circle.*

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# 7

*This is the main content area where course content is displayed.*

*The bar above is the title bar and the bar below the navigation bar.*

*Now close this box and click on another circle, or click on next page if this is the last circle.*

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# 2

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## Introduction

# Introduction

## Introduction

These modules are part of a course designed to help non-native speakers of English to learn useful vocabulary and structures associated with journalism. They will also provide reading and listening practice around particular vocabulary topics.



1

You'll have a chance to learn new vocabulary in its original context, and practise listening and reading using authentic BBC news stories. At the

2

This unit will look at vocabulary associated with elections and politics.

- 
- 1** These modules are part of a course designed to help non-native speakers of English to learn useful vocabulary and structures associated with journalism. They will also provide reading and listening practice around particular vocabulary topics.

Some modules will focus on vocabulary and others on grammar. We'll look at topics such as reporting on conflict, diplomacy and business, and study grammatical areas such as reported speech and tenses.

- 
- 2** You'll have a chance to learn new vocabulary in its original context, and practise listening and reading using authentic BBC news stories. At the end there is a glossary of vocabulary which gives a list of all of the words, word partnerships and expressions used throughout the module. Have a pen and paper ready to note down your answers and important vocabulary!
-



# 3

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## Vocabulary

# There's a lot of vocabulary associated with elections.

Click on the circles to find five definitions for some political jargon (vocabulary often used with politics).

## Stale Political Jargon

There is a vocabulary which comes into its own at election time and which politicians seize on in order to explain what they are doing and sometimes to get their case across and sometimes to distort what other people are doing. Election coverage itself – a whole world of swings and floating voters and margins of opinion and popularity ratings and poll dives and all this kind of stuff. Then you have the language in which the politicians themselves conduct the battle. I'm tired of the same old phrases, tired of ministers talking about joined-up government, and rolling out programmes ...

Matthew Parris, Politician and Journalist

1

*A **swing** is a change in favour of a particular political party.*

2

***Floating voters** haven't decided who to vote for yet.*

3

***Popularity ratings** are the results of surveys of public opinion showing how popular politicians are with the people who are going to vote - **the electorate**.*

---

4

***Joined-up government** is the idea that different government departments should work together effectively.*

---

5

***To roll out** a programme is **to implement, launch** or introduce a programme, particularly if it is going to be done at slightly different times in different places.*

---

## Political terminology

Drag and drop the vocabulary to complete the sentences.

Journalists might use various terms to refer to different kinds of politicians. See if you can match the vocabulary with the definitions.

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A president with little power left.	a lame duck
The person who currently holds a position.	the incumbent
A supporter of aggressive foreign policy.	a hawk
A politician anxious to change society or a political system.	a reformer
Someone who doubts if a policy will work.	a sceptic

# Political vocabulary

Drag and drop the vocabulary to match the definition.

.....

Another word for a political conservative.	a right winger
--	----------------

A politician who does not support extreme views.	a moderate
--	------------

Any British MP who does not hold a ministerial post.	a backbencher
--	---------------

A politician who strongly believes in a fixed set of ideas and refuses to change.	a hardliner
---	-------------

A politician with socialist beliefs.	a left winger
--------------------------------------	---------------

## As well as learning individual words, we also need to learn which words work well together.

Some word combinations just don't work. Click on the hotspots to find out which word partnerships work.

**Brown 'fears double poll defeat'**  
Gordon Brown wants to hold next year's European and English local <sup>1</sup>elections on the same day because he is "terrified" of a double defeat, the Tories say. The government is consulting on running two polls on the same day next June, saying this will save money and avoid confusion among voters. But shadow local government minister Bob Neill said the prime minister was "running <sup>2</sup>scared". The dates were combined in 2004, the <sup>3</sup>first time European elections were held. The Department of Communities and Local Government is looking at doing so again but said a <sup>4</sup>last decision had not yet been taken. A spokesman said: "The 2004 local elections were also held on the same date as the European elections, and voter <sup>5</sup>involvement increased in the latter. "We want to see a modern, efficient and secure <sup>6</sup>electoral structure which is as convenient and as straightforward for the voter as possible."

1

Correct - elections for city or county councils are known as local elections.

2

Correct - *running scared* means acting in a frightened way.

3

Wrong. The *last* time would be a better combination.

---

4

Wrong. The ***final*** decision works better.

---

5

Wrong. Voter ***participation*** sounds much better.

---

6

Wrong. Electoral ***system*** is the ***collocation*** (word partnership).

---

# Campaign finance

## Campaign finance

*Collocations are words which are frequently used together - word partnerships. Knowing which words are often used together can help*

2

Barack Obama's campaign revealed that the Illinois senator raised \$52m in the month of June, a marked improvement on his May fundraising total, and his second-biggest monthly haul of the campaign so far (he raised \$55m in February).

John McCain's June total was £22m, which, although considerably lower than his competitor, was his best ever monthly figure.

But the gap between the two candidates disappears if money raised by the Democratic and Republican National Committees (DNC and RNC) is taken into account.

The RNC has been much more successful than the



1

1 Barack Obama's campaign revealed that the Illinois senator raised \$52m in the month of June, a marked improvement on his May fundraising total, and his second-biggest monthly haul of the campaign so far (he raised \$55m in February).

John McCain's June total was £22m, which, although considerably lower than his competitor, was his best ever monthly figure.

But the gap between the two candidates disappears if money raised by the Democratic and Republican National Committees (DNC and RNC) is taken into account.

The RNC has been much more successful than the DNC at raising money in recent months and, although the DNC managed to raise \$22m to the RNC's \$26m in June, the combined RNC and McCain camps had some \$95m cash on hand at the beginning of July, compared to the combined DNC and Obama camp total of \$92m.

With similar amounts of cash at their disposal going into the summer, neither candidate will be able to outflank his rival financially in the battleground states.



---

**2** *Collocations are words which are frequently used together - word partnerships. Knowing which words are often used together can help you to build vocabulary more effectively.*

*Read this text and then answer the questions on the next page.*

---

## Collocations

Drag and drop the words below to complete the collocations.

All of these collocations were taken from the text you've just read about Barack Obama. Can you match the collocations? Notice how many of the terms are military in origin - a campaign (a series of battles), to outflank (to attack from the side or rear), a battleground (where a battle takes place).

---

a marked	improvement
Obama's (election)	campaign
to raise	money
to outflank	a rival
a battleground	state

# 4

---

**Reading**

# Different ways of reading

## Different ways of reading

Think about how you read different texts. You don't approach a newspaper article in the same way as you might the flight information board at an airport or a recipe for baking a cake.

Basically, there are three different ways of reading - reading for general meaning or gist (known as skimming), reading for specific information (scanning) and reading for detailed knowledge.

1



2



International departures		
09:10 Rome	BA988	Cancelled
09:15 Tripoli	BA986	Cancelled
09:20 Kiev	BA882	Cancelled
09:25 Barcelona	BA484	Cancelled
09:30 Madrid	BA458	Cancelled
09:40 Munich	BA950	Cancelled
09:45 Bucharest	BA886	Cancelled
09:55 St Petersburg	BA878	Cancelled
09:55 Istanbul	BA676	Cancelled
10:05 Los Angeles	BA279	Cancelled
10:20 Helsinki	AY832	Cancelled
10:20 Lisbon	BA496	Cancelled
10:40 Frankfurt	BA904	Cancelled

3



4

- 1 Think about how you read different texts. You don't approach a newspaper article in the same way as you might the flight information board at an airport or a recipe for baking a cake.

Basically, there are three different ways of reading - reading for general meaning or gist (known as skimming), reading for specific information (scanning) and reading for detailed knowledge.

Studies seem to show that, although we automatically select the appropriate reading style in our first language, most learners only ever read for detail in a second language and never fully develop effective *skimming* and *scanning* techniques.

The next exercises will allow you to practise the three different ways of reading.

- 2 Skim read a newspaper

- 3 Scan the departure board

- 4 Read a recipe for detail

# Skim reading

## Skim reading

Reading a text quickly to absorb general information is a valuable skill. The text below will disappear in 30 seconds, so you'll have to read it quickly! When you've finished, go to the

1

### 'More notice' call for elections

The prime minister should give more than a month's notice if he is calling a general election, a watchdog has suggested in a report.

The Electoral Commission recommends extending the parliamentary election timetable from 17 to 25 working days - in line with that of local government.

It says extra time is needed for printing and processing postal votes.

Elsewhere in the report it raised some concerns about electronic counting in the 2008 London elections.

The current notice period is 17 working days before polling day.

.....

1 Reading a text quickly to absorb general information is a valuable skill. The text below will disappear in 30 seconds, so you'll have to read it quickly! When you've finished, go to the next page to answer a question about the general meaning.

.....

## Skim reading

Click on the number next to the best summary of the text.

- 1 The prime minister will now tell people that there will be an election 25 days before it takes place.
- 2 An independent group has suggested that we should be told that there will be a general election further in advance.
- 3 More notices should be displayed in public places telling people there will be an election.
- 4 People will now be given longer to send postal votes in general elections.

---

1

*Wrong. The suggestion did not come from the prime minister.*

---

2

*Correct. This is the best summary.*

---

3

*Wrong. The text said more notice (which means advanced warning), not notices.*

---

---

# 4

*Wrong. It's true that the Electoral Commission wants more time to organise postal votes and other things, but not that people will have more time to send their votes.*

---

# Scan reading

## Scan reading

It is also important to be able to read a text in order to find particular information quickly. When you are ready, click and you'll soon see a short article about a by-election (an election for one member of parliament

By-election looms after MP quits

The resignation of Glasgow East MP David Marshall, who has been in the Commons since 1979, is set to trigger a by-election in a government safe seat.

2

This has opened up a vacancy in the constituency, where Labour holds a 13,507 majority. Mr Marshall is standing down due to problems with his health.

Labour strategists were understood to have pencilled in 24 July as a possible date for the by-election.

A party spokesman said it was still deciding when to officially start the contest.

1. The election will take place in Glasgow West.
2. The election is happening because the current MP is not well.
3. Mr Marshall has been an MP since 1979.
4. The current MP is not a member of the Labour Party.

1

3

1

1. The election will take place in Glasgow West.
2. The election is happening because the current MP is not well.
3. Mr Marshall has been an MP since 1979.
4. The current MP is not a member of the Labour Party.
5. The current MP has a majority of more than 13,000.
6. The election will take place on 24 July.

2

It is also important to be able to read a text in order to find particular information quickly. When you are ready, click and you'll soon see a short article about a by-election (an election for one member of parliament because the current MP is resigning or unable to continue). Read the text and decide if these statements are true or false. The answers are on the following page.



---

### 3 By-election looms after MP quits

The resignation of Glasgow East MP David Marshall, who has been in the Commons since 1979, is set to trigger a by-election in a government safe seat.

This has opened up a vacancy in the constituency, where Labour holds a 13,507 majority. Mr Marshall is standing down due to problems with his health.

Labour strategists were understood to have pencilled in 24 July as a possible date for the by-election.

A party spokesman said it was still deciding when to officially start the contest.

He said: "The National Executive Committee will consider the timetable in due course but at this time our thoughts are with David Marshall and his family."

---

## Scan reading

Decide whether the sentences are true or false, then click on the number next to each sentence to check.

- 1 The election will take place in Glasgow West.
- 2 The election is happening because the current MP is not well.
- 3 Mr Marshall has been an MP since 1979.
- 4 The current MP is not a member of the Labour Party.
- 5 The current MP has a majority of more than 13,000.
- 6 The election will take place on July 24<sup>th</sup>.

---

1

*False. It will take place in Glasgow East.*

---

2

*True. It is due to ill health.*

---

3

*True.*

---

---

4

*False, he is a member.*

---

5

*True. In the last election he won 13,507 more votes than the candidate who came second.*

---

6

*False. This is a possible date, but nothing has been decided yet.*

---

# 5

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## Listening

# Listening practice

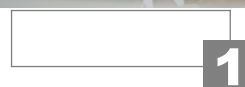
## Listening practice

The next few pages have exercises to help you to practise your listening in English. You'll need to have speakers for these exercises. Make sure they're turned on!

Listen to the audio and then answer the questions on the page.

If you need to listen again, you can click the *restart page* button (the circular arrow at the bottom of the page).

You can listen as many times as you want.



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**1** A politician listening for once!

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## Listening for detail

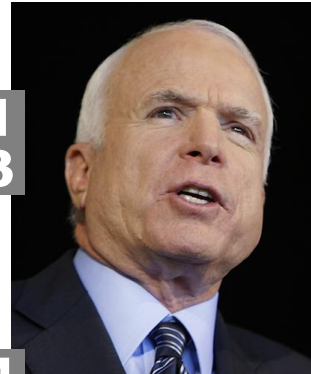
### Listening for detail

In this speech shortly before the November 2008 election, John McCain says that he

Choose the best summary of what he says, then click here to see the answer:

- A) The election campaign is very close.
- B) The economy is very bad and the USA is

**CORRECT ANSWER:** B) The economy is very bad and the USA is involved in two conflicts.



- 
- 1** In this speech shortly before the November 2008 election, John McCain says that he thinks the election will be historic. But why?

Click on the photo to listen to the speech.

- 
- 2** **CORRECT ANSWER:** B) The economy is very bad and the USA is involved in two conflicts.

He says: "Because of the nation's economy, the worst economy seen in anyone's lives ... and we're also in two wars and Americans are in harm's way as we speak tonight ..."

---

**3**

- 
- 4** Choose the best summary of what he says, then click here to see the answer:

- A) The election campaign is very close.
  - B) The economy is very bad and the USA is involved in two conflicts.
  - C) The Asian economy is in a bad way and soldiers are in Iraq.
  - D) The economy is a problem and today the issue of arms is important.
-

# Listening for specific information

## Listening for specific information

English has a lot of phrasal verbs - verbs with a preposition - for example *to go on*, meaning *to continue*. They can be difficult to learn because they may look very similar to each other but can have very

1

- A) slow up, sit down, let back
- B) slow back, sit up, let down
- C) slow down, sit back, let up

3

CORRECT ANSWER: C) *To slow down* is to reduce speed; *to sit back* is to relax in a chair; *to let up* is to stop working.

4

2



- 1 English has a lot of phrasal verbs - verbs with a preposition - for example *to go on*, meaning *to continue*. They can be difficult to learn because they may look very similar to each other but can have very different meanings, and native speakers use them very frequently.

Here, Obama says that the Democrats should not relax, but which of the phrasal verb combinations below does he use?

2

- 3
- A) slow up, sit down, let back
  - B) slow back, sit up, let down
  - C) slow down, sit back, let up

Click on the picture to listen to the speech. Then click here to see the answer.

- 4 CORRECT ANSWER: C) *To slow down* is to reduce speed; *to sit back* is to relax in a chair; *to let up* is to stop working.

Find the other phrasal verbs in a dictionary.

# Listening for general meaning

## Listening for general meaning

You're going to hear a political commentator make a prediction about the US election in 2008, speaking the night before the election. You can click *restart page* if you need to listen again.

Click on the photograph to listen to the speaker and then choose the best answer from the options below.

In the opinion of the speaker, why is it unlikely that John McCain will win the



1

Answer:  
B) Opinion polls indicate Obama will win.  
He has led in virtually all of 159 recent surveys.

2

---

**1** You're going to hear a political commentator make a prediction about the US election in 2008, speaking the night before the election. You can click *restart page* if you need to listen again.

Click on the photograph to listen to the speaker and then choose the best answer from the options below.

In the opinion of the speaker, why is it unlikely that John McCain will win the election?

- A) Reporters say that Obama will win.
- B) Opinion polls indicate Obama will win.
- C) Obama has a titanic lead in the surveys.

Now click here to reveal the answer.

---

**2** Answer:  
B) Opinion polls indicate Obama will win.  
He has led in virtually all of 159 recent surveys.  
Refresh the page if you need to listen again.

---



## True/False

Listen to the speaker and decide if each question is true or false.



You can listen again by clicking *restart page*. Once you've decided, click on each question to see if you were right.



**There was bad news for both candidates this week.**

*True*

Dick Cheney supports Barack Obama.

*False. He has endorsed John McCain.*



**Obama has an aunt living illegally in Boston.**

*True*

The Republicans will use this against Obama.

*False. It's too late in the campaign.*



**Millions of US citizens have already voted.**

*True - perhaps a quarter of the turnout.*

## Collocations

Drag and drop the words below to complete the expressions.

Listen to this description of the US elections. All of these five expressions are used in the description. Match the words below to form expressions. There might be several possibilities, but what did the newsreader say? Click the *restart page* arrow if you need to listen again.

---

an uphill	battle
a gruelling	schedule
a desperate	appeal
swing	states
the final	push

## You've seen all of these expressions - but what do they mean?

Drag and drop the words to the correct place in the text. There is one extra word!

If you're having a really difficult time, it is an **uphill** battle. If you're very busy, you have a **gruelling** schedule. If things were about to go badly wrong and you needed help, you might make a **desperate** appeal. Those areas which could vote for either major party in the US are called **swing** states. A last effort might be described as a **final** push.

## Did I say that?



Very often journalists have to write a brief summary of a political speech, so summarising fairly and accurately is a key skill for reporters. Listen to the audio and decide whether what is written below is a fair summary of what Obama says. You can listen again by clicking on *restart page*. Then click on each point to check.

---

People are right to be worried about the future.

*Incorrect - he says "those who'd been told for so long, by so many, to be cynical and fearful and doubtful", but means they were being warned against change.*



---

**People have waited a long time for change.**

*Correct - he says "It's been a long time coming."*

---

---

People do not believe in change.

*Incorrect - he says people were warned about change (by his opponents) but have chosen to change history themselves by voting for him.*

---



**This is a very important time.**

*Correct - he says it is "a defining moment".*

---

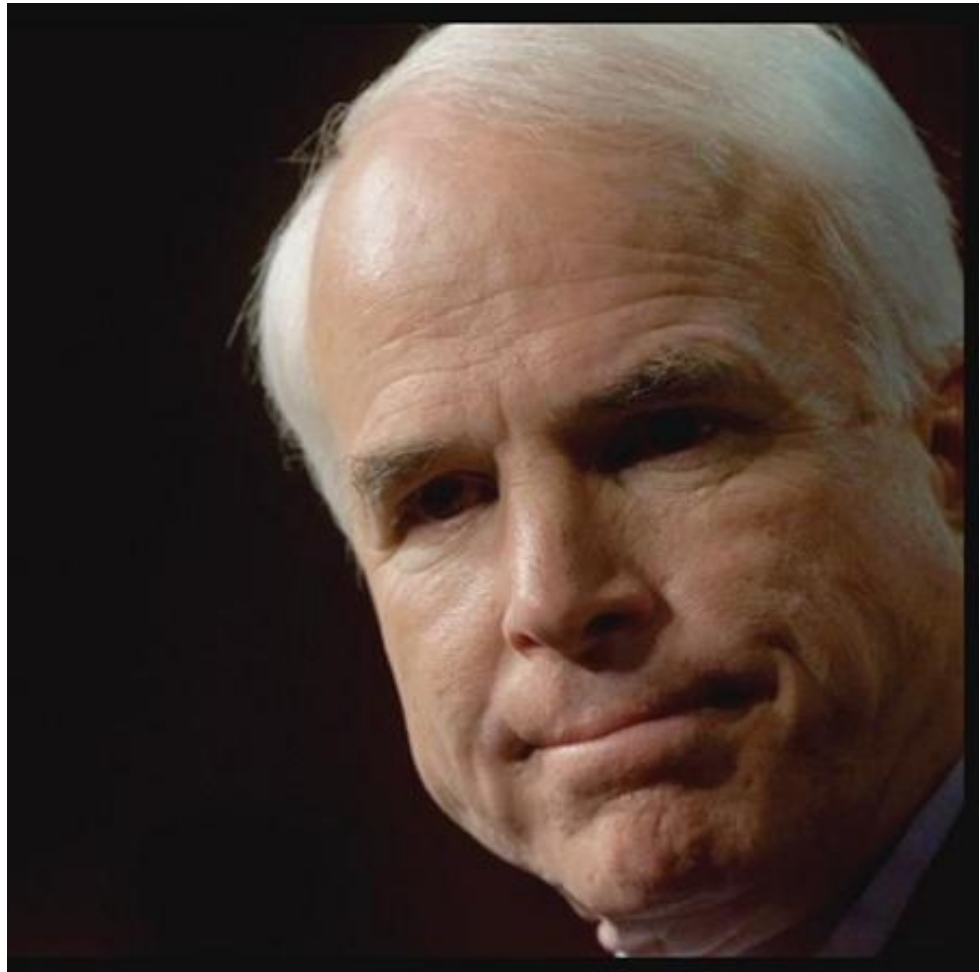


**By voting for him, people have changed history.**

*Correct - he says "It's the answer that led those ... to put their hands on the arc of history and bend it once more toward the hope of a better day."*

---

## Did I say that?



Listen to the audio and decide whether what is written below is a fair summary of what McCain says. Then click on each point to check. You can listen again by refreshing the page (the circular arrow at the bottom of the page).



**McCain admits he has been defeated.**

*Correct - he says Obama has prevailed.*



**McCain promises to help Obama in the future.**

*Correct - he says "I pledged to him tonight to do all in my power to help him lead us through the many challenges we face."*

---

McCain encourages his supporters to continue to struggle against the Democrats.

*Incorrect - he says "I urge all Americans who supported me to join me in not just congratulating him, but offering our next president our good will and earnest effort to find ways to come together to find the necessary compromises to bridge our differences."*

---

**McCain says it is necessary to work together in the interests of the economy, safety and to make a better future.**



*Correct - he says it is necessary to work together in order to "help restore our prosperity, defend our security in a dangerous world and leave our children and grandchildren a stronger, better country than we inherited".*

---

## Who said what?

Drag and drop the vocabulary to the picture of the person who said it.

---

### Barack Obama

cynical

fearful

doubtful

It's been a long time coming

a defining moment

the arc of history



---

### John McCain

prevailed

pledged

to do all in my power

to urge

earnest

prosperity





# 6

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## Glossary

# Glossary

Glossary	
<p>jargon a swing a floating voter joined-up government to roll out a programme a sceptic a hawk a reformer an incumbent a lame duck a left winger a backbencher a right winger a moderate a hardliner local elections voter participation the electoral system a collocation</p>	<p>language that is used by a particular group or profession a sudden change in support for a particular party a voter who hasn't decided yet effective coordination between government departments to launch a programme gradually somebody who doubts something is true a believer in aggressive foreign policy a supporter of change the current holder of a political position a president or politician who no longer has any power someone with socialist beliefs a member of parliament who is not a minister someone with conservative political beliefs someone who does not hold extreme political beliefs someone who does not believe in changing their beliefs in Britain, city or county council elections a measure of how much people go out and vote the way elections are organised word partnerships or words which are commonly used</p>

**1** This is a list of all of the vocabulary used in the module, together with a definition:

**2** jargon  
a swing  
a floating voter  
joined-up government  
to roll out a programme  
a sceptic  
a hawk  
a reformer  
an incumbent  
a lame duck  
a left winger  
a backbencher  
a right winger  
a moderate  
a hardliner  
local elections  
voter participation  
the electoral system  
a collocation  
a marked improvement  
a haul  
to raise money

- 
- 3** language that is used by a particular group or profession  
a sudden change in support for a particular party  
a voter who hasn't decided yet  
effective coordination between government departments  
to launch a programme gradually  
somebody who doubts something is true  
a believer in aggressive foreign policy  
a supporter of change  
the current holder of a political position  
a president or politician who no longer has any power  
someone with socialist beliefs  
a member of parliament who is not a minister  
someone with conservative political beliefs  
someone who does not hold extreme political beliefs  
someone who does not believe in changing their beliefs  
in Britain, city or county council elections  
a measure of how much people go out and vote  
the way elections are organised  
word partnerships or words which are commonly used together  
a large improvement which is easy to notice  
a collection  
to gather new funds
-

# Glossary

## Glossary

to outflank someone  
a battleground state  
an election campaign  
a notice period  
a watchdog  
working days  
a by-election  
to loom  
to trigger something  
a vacancy  
a constituency  
a majority  
to stand down  
to pencil something in  
in due course  
historic  
to slow down  
to sit back  
to let up

to attack from the side; to defeat by clever manoeuvre  
a state where the election will be close  
the entire election from beginning to end  
a period of warning  
an organisation guarding against unacceptable practices  
Monday to Friday in Britain  
an election caused by the death or resignation of an existing MP  
to come closer (particularly in a threatening way)  
to cause something to happen  
an empty space  
an electoral district - in Britain, the area which votes for one MP  
a position where you have more votes than your opponent  
to resign/leave political office  
to start making plans to do something  
soon  
something which will be remembered in future  
to decelerate, get slower  
to relax  
to relax, stop pressuring something

1

2

1 to outflank someone  
a battleground state  
an election campaign  
a notice period  
a watchdog  
working days  
a by-election  
to loom  
to trigger something  
a vacancy  
a constituency  
a majority  
to stand down  
to pencil something in  
in due course  
historic  
to slow down  
to sit back  
to let up  
titanic  
an uphill battle  
a gruelling schedule  
a desperate appeal  
swing states  
the final push

---

<b>2</b>	to attack from the side; to defeat by clever manoeuvre
	a state where the election will be close
	the entire election from beginning to end
	a period of warning
	an organisation guarding against unacceptable practices
	Monday to Friday in Britain
	an election caused by the death or resignation of an existing MP
	to come closer (particularly in a threatening way)
	to cause something to happen
	an empty space
	an electoral district - in Britain, the area which votes for one MP
	a position where you have more votes than your opponent
	to resign/leave political office
	to start making plans to do something
	soon
	something which will be remembered in future
	to decelerate, get slower
	to relax
	to relax, stop pressuring something
	very large
	a difficult position
	a very busy timetable
	to ask for something when in a very bad position
	states which could vote for either party
	a last attempt to succeed

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